

Conceptual clarifications on some terms related to the modernization of the villages of Wallachia in 1831-1858: systematization, regularization, alignment

Article history

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Abstract: The research undertaken here focuses on the urban modernization of the villages of Wallachia from the period of the *Organic Regulation* (1831-1858). It intends to specify the semantic sense of the terms by which this modernization is expressed: systematization, regularization, alignment. For this, I do the analysis of archival documents and works related to the systematization of villages. The study identifies specific limitations and definitions by the authors' field of activity and specifies the semantic evolution of the term systematization with reference to the regulatory period. The research and its conclusions allow a better understanding of the process of modernization and Europeanization through which the Romanian space and by extension, the South-Eastern European space went through in the first half of the 19th century. With clear concepts we have a right definition of the entire historical process.

Keywords: systematization; regularization; alignment; ruralism; urban modernization.

Titlu: „Precizări conceptuale asupra unor termeni referitori la modernizarea satelor Valahiei în perioada 1831-1858: sistematizare, regularizare, aliniere”

Rezumat: Cercetarea întreprinsă aici are în vedere modernizarea urbanistică a satelor Valahiei din perioada Regulamentului Organic (1831-1858). Ea caută să precizeze încărcătura semantică a termenilor prin care este exprimată această modernizare: sistematizare, regularizare, aliniere. Pentru aceasta se face analiza documentelor de arhivă și a lucrărilor referitoare la sistematizarea satelor. Studiul identifică limitări și definiții specifice în funcție de domeniul de activitate al autorilor și precizează evoluția semantică a termenului sistematizare cu referire la perioada regulamentară. Cercetarea și concluziile ei permit o mai bună înțelegere a procesului de modernizare și europeanizare prin care a trecut spațiul românesc și prin extensie cel sud-est european în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea. Deținerea unor concepte clare permite o corectă definire a întregului proces istoric.

Cuvinte-cheie: sistematizare; regularizare; aliniere; ruralism; modernizare urbanistică.

Introduction

The Russian-Turkish war of 1828 and 1829 ended with the Treaty of Adrianople which, among other provisions, established the adoption of two regulations for the organization of the Romanian Principalities. They will be known as Organic Regulations and came into force in May 1831 for Wallachia, respectively in December 1831 in Moldova. Therefore, the month of May 1831 marks the beginning of the regulatory period for Wallachia. The end of the period is on August 1858, when in the capital of France was adopted "Convention for the definitive organization of the Danube Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia", drafted in accordance with the decisions of the Paris Congress of 1856. Thus, since August 1858 the Organic Regulations have legally ceased to be valid.

Romanian historians distinguish between the political part of the Organic Regulation, "the last refuge of despotism", and the administrative one, which "increased unprecedentedly the degree of civilization"¹. From this modernizing character of the administrative part of the Organic Regulation comes the reference to the general term of systematization.

The term of "systematization" comes from the language of architects and implies a modernizing vision of the habitat. Its use, with reference to a relatively distant era, namely the first half of the 19th century, for Wallachia and its villages, an area perceived as being at that time a backward one of Europe, can generate a circumspect attitude of the receiver of the information. The situation is more plausible in Romania, where the word got a pejorative meaning under the influence of the program of systematization of villages during the communist regime². Therefore, it is welcome to specify some details regarding to the definition of systematization with applicability to Wallachia during the period of the Organic Regulation.

Methodology

In order to edify ourselves on the concepts of alignment, regularization, systematization, we analyzed in the first part of the article several archive documents and publications from the Regulatory period. Thus, we were able to establish what the semantic load of these terms in that era was.

In the second part of the article, we identified the Romanian authors and the works in which they refer to the alignment, regularization and systematization of villages during the Regulatory period. Starting from this bibliography, I have identified the definitions given to the three terms through the way and the context these were used in. To see what the semantic evolution of the terms was, I put this bibliography into relation to the documents and publications of the Regulatory period.

¹ Anastasie Iordache, „Dominare politică sub imperativul modernizării Principatelor Române. Caracterul și scopul Regulamentelor Organice”. *Revista Istorică* VII, nr. 9-10 (1996): 668.

² Dinu C. Giurescu, *The razing of Romania's past* (Washington, 1989).

Results and discussions

The question of the relationship between the Organic Regulation of Wallachia and rural systematization was put in the context of paragraph e) of Article 151, combined with paragraph l) of Article 140¹. These concise provisions of the Organic Regulation were then developed through a series of orders, addresses, guidelines and clarifications that will complete the legislative framework of the systematization of Romanian villages from the Regulatory period. This legislation allows the formulation of a definition of the systematization of rural settlements from the Regulatory period in the sense that it is the operation carried out as a result of the provisions of the Organic Regulation through which villages or parts of villages were moved to new sites and organized according to modern principles.

The first aspect that we will highlight is that in the documents of the Regulatory period the term systematization was never used. Under different formulas and a less comprehensive meaning were used "regularization", "settlement on the line" or "alignment". We can provide several examples of this. Thus, there is talk of "setting the houses on the line" in documents from 1835², 1836³ or 1844⁴.

More documents from December 1836 use the expression "the settlement of the villages on a line"⁵, and in an address of the Prahova County Government to the homonymous sub-county from May 1838, it is specified that it was desired "the settlement of the houses on the line in a regular plan" for "it can guard the good orders" and defend the villages against "evildoers that disturb the peace of the community"⁶.

Other documents, in various contexts, use expressions with the term "regularization". Some, from February, March and April 1838, refer to the "regularization of the houses of the inhabitants on the line" and the "regularization of the houses on the line"⁷. Another, coming from the same source, mentions about "the place where the need demands to regularize the alignment"⁸. Documents from the year 1844 talk about "villages regularized on the line"⁹.

The document from April 15, 1838, containing instructions sent by the Prahova County Government to the district with the same name, explains better what was meant in the era by the term we are interested in. Thus "the rule by which the houses are to be placed in line again", according to the given commandments, meant: "the houses should be built on a straight street and on one side and the other, not far apart from each other, and the wide street settled in a good place and useful for the health of the inhabitants, with a certain square in the middle"¹⁰.

¹ *Analele Parlamentare al Românei, tom I, partea I, 1831* (București, 1890): 180, 249.

² Romanian National Archives, Vornicia din Lăuntru, 278/1835, f. 231

³ Prahova County Archives, Pretura Plaiului Prahova, 334/1836, f. 2.

⁴ Romanian National Archives, Vornicia din Lăuntru, 16/1844, f. 1.

⁵ Prahova County Archives, Pretura Plaiului Prahova, 334/1836, f. 4-5.

⁶ Prahova County Archives, Pretura Plaiului Prahova, 415/1838, f. 18.

⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 1, 11, 15.

⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 3.

⁹ Romanian National Archives, Vornicia din Lăuntru, 16/1844, f. 50.

¹⁰ Prahova County Archives, Pretura Plaiului Prahova, 415/1838, f. 14.

From these few examples we can realize that "regularization" meant, on the one hand, arranging the village in an established perimeter and, on the other hand, fixing and building its houses according to some rules established by the authorities. The goals pursued by the authorities were both idealistic (beautification, ordering) and practical (hygiene, health, public order, control).

Regarding the semantic coverage of the terms/expressions "regularization", "settlement to line" or "alignment", the documents of the Regulatory period are pretty edifying. Thus, from a draft drawn up in December 1831 for the purpose of "Regulating the building of the dwellings of the inhabitants", we find out what were the main components of "settlement on the line" according to the legislators of the time: the elaboration and imposition of a standard plan of the peasant household (dwelling, stable, garden, orchard, fence); the arrangement the houses in a suitable place to benefit from communications, light, air, water, field, pasture, hygiene and health; determining the materials from which the houses will be built; determining an appropriate width of the roads; establishing an adequate distance between houses; a convenient location of public buildings (council, school, church, inn...)¹.

"Setting the houses in a line" also meant gathering scattered houses and disposing all in the village on a number of straight lines consisting of two parallel rows of households. The lines could cross each other perpendicularly depending on the nature of the land and the size of the settlement. They referred to a center of the village that was to be established². Then, a document from December 1836, where the expression "setting the houses in a line" was used, confirms to us that it included both "building a house" and "its enclosures"³.

An emphasis that must be made is that in none of the editions of the Organic Regulation (published in Bucharest in 1832 and 1847) there is no mention of "setting on line" or "alignment" relating with villages or peasant houses. Article 151, letter e), from the edition of the Organic Regulation from 1832, mentions the obligation of the villagers to "build their regular and rest homes"⁴.

Before focusing on the meaning of the term systematization and how it was used by specialists regarding the regulatory period, in order to have a common starting point, we will quote a current definition: "Transformation, scientific reorganization of a territory or of an urban or rural settlement for the purpose of beautifying or creating optimal living conditions; set of technical, economic and legislative measures related to living spaces, the performance of the activity, rest, the movement of people and materials etc. which are taken in order to ensure optimal living conditions. Branch of urban planning that deals with the scientific design and reorganization of urban and rural settlements."⁵

From the research undertaken, we found that the term "systematization" with reference to Romanian cities from the period before the middle of the 19th century was

¹ *Analele Parlamentare ale României, tom II, 1831-1832* (București, 1892): 617-618.

² Romanian National Archives, Vornicia din Launtru, 278/1835, f. 231, 280.

³ Prahova County Archives, Pretura Plaiului Prahova, 334/1836, f. 2.

⁴ *Regulamentul Organic* (București, 1832): 99.

⁵ *Dicționarul limbii române, vol. 19* (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2010): 996.

used without reservations by specialists from the most diverse fields. Instead, the term "systematization" with reference to Romanian villages from the period before the middle of the 19th century was used much more sparingly. Even the semantic load assigned to it differs, depending on the specialization of the author of the paper where we find it used. That is why we consider it useful that the following review should take into account the specialization of the authors, in order to ascertain how they perceived its meaning and a possible semantic evolution of the meaning.

The series of specialists is opened by ethnologists, through Paul Petrescu, honorary member of the Romanian Academy, the first one we found using, in 1963, the expression "systematization of villages" with reference to the 18th and 19th centuries. Studying the history of Banat folk architecture, Paul Petrescu noted the transformations that took place in the villages of this area as a result of the systematization imposed by the Austrian administration between 1720 and 1829. The author highlights the fact that the rural systematization in Banat, applied on the basis of standard plans, affected the materials of construction, the size of the buildings, the arrangement in relation to the street network and the orientation of the houses. It was preceded and then accompanied by "the vast hydro-improvement studies and works led by engineers". From the few elements presented, we understand that Paul Petrescu had a broader perspective of the issue, encompassing both the systematization of settlements and the systematization of the territory¹.

Another ethnologist, Ionuț Dumitrescu, head of the Ethnography section at the Valcea County Museum, in a short article in which he intended to review "the typology of rural settlements in Valcea County", refers to the operation of "systematization of villages", by which he means "the action of collecting and lining up the houses", a definition taken from the historian Ilie Corfus, which will be discussed later².

A broader meaning attributed to the term, somehow similar to the ethnologist Paul Petrescu, is also found at the architect Andrei Pănoiu who claims that in the Romanian space, in the 18th and 19th centuries, there were concerns "of organizing the territory and systematizing settlements, be they fairs and villages". Therefore, he has no qualms in attributing the term "systematization" to the villages of the 19th century. It places a series of principles under the umbrella of systematization: the gathering of scattered houses by concentrating or moving them to other homes in a gathered manner; building healthy homes; control of craftsmen and materials used in housing construction; "territorial regulation measures, with rules for land cultivation, forest control, water course planning, transport development, settlement ordering...", making decisions and drawing up systematic property plans³. Therefore, regarding the systematization, the architect

¹ Paul Petrescu, „Contribuții la studiul arhitecturii populare din Banat”, *Anuarul Muzeului Etnografic al Transilvaniei pe anii 1959-1961* (1963): 147-175.

² Ionuț Dumitrescu, „Tipologia așezărilor rurale din Vâlcea”, *Buridava. Studii și materiale* V (2007): 174-182.

³ Andrei Pănoiu, „Arhitectura tradițională românească în secolul al XIX-lea – alinierea satelor”, *Arhitectura*, nr. 4 (1984) 37-46; Idem, „Din opera de sistematizare a teritoriului în secolul al XIX-lea. Amenajarea navigabilă a principalelor râuri ale țării”, *Arhitectura*, nr. 4 (1986).

Andrei Panoiu identified two components on which he reflected his action: territory and settlement.

The article "Regulatory era and urbanism", signed by the architect Nicolae Lascu, includes a theoretical analysis on the urbanism of the regulatory period¹. Although he focuses his attention on the cities, he also captures some aspects related to the rural systematization which included: land improvements; establishing new locations for villages; the restriction of the buildable space; drawing up regular plans; placing the houses in line. It follows that the architect Nicolae Lascu integrated the systematization of the villages into a broader concept of the systematization of the territory.

Also, valuable contributions in researching the transformations suffered by the localities in the western part of Romania are made by architect Teodor Octavian Gheorghiu. By "Austrian systematization" he means the "phenomenon of Austrian colonization and restructuring of the settlement system" in the Banat-Crisana area throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. The operation led to: "the grouping of several localities (especially Romanian ones) into a single one drawn according to a geometric drawing"; "the alignment of old settlements, resulting in regular structures"; "extension of existing settlements through geometrically shaped areas" etc. The author calls them "systematization measures", and the result of their application is "systematized settlements"². For Teodor Octavian Gheorghiu, the systematization of villages represents a "system of laws" applied to establishing the location of settlements and the way in which they were organized internally.

Unlike the architects, Romanian historians, which we will continue to deal with, will prove a more nuanced vision on the concept of "systematization of villages".

Thus, the historian Ilie Corfus, in several works and articles published since 1967, uses the term systematization with a narrower meaning even than the ethnologist Paul Petrescu, attributing to it the meaning of gathering and aligning houses in villages according to rules established by authorities³.

Around the same time we will also meet Serban Papacostea using without restraint the term systematization with reference to the Olten villages in the first half of the 18th century and the operation undertaken there by the Habsburg Empire: "The new masters of the province understood, however, not only to create the framework institutional without which the stabilization of the population was unthinkable, but also to effectively regroup and fix the rural mass in stable and systematized village centers; it is the first attempt to systematize and modernize the rural habitat and which will not be resumed until the Regulatory era."⁴.

¹ Nicolae Lascu, „Epoca regulamentară și urbanismul. Câteva observații generale”, *Historia Urbana*, nr. 2 (1994): 119-130.

² Teodor Octavian Gheorghiu, *Locuirea tradițională rurală din zona Banat-Crișana. Elemente de istorie și morfologie, protecție și integrare* (Timișoara: Editura Eurobit, 2008): 9, 33.

³ Ilie Corfus, „Încercări de sistematizare a satelor din Țara Românească sub Regulamentul Organic”, *Revista Arhivelor*, anul X, nr. 2 (1967): 195-212.

⁴ Șerban Papacostea, *Oltenia sub stăpânire austriacă* (București: Editura Academiei, 1978): 31.

For Louis Roman, a specialist in historical demography, the systematization of the villages from the Regulatory period meant, as in the case of Ilie Corfus, "the gathering and placing of the houses in a line"¹.

Vasile Novac, PhD in History, museographer at the Arges County Museum, manager of the Golesti Museum, researching "the arrangement of houses on the line in the 4th decade of the 19th century in Arges County", establishes a relationship of similarity between "the systematization of villages" and "placing the houses on the line"².

Referring to the old part of Piscani village (Arges county), the historian Teodor Dina includes in the systematization operations carried out between 1831 and 1840: placing the houses in a line; displacement along lines of the disaffected; modernization of the village road; the sedentarization of the gypsies-relatives; construction of the school premises; the establishment of the fair; building bridges; the establishment of the night watch service; establishment of a road maintenance service³.

We will conclude the analysis of the concept of "systematization of villages" in the view of Romanian historians through an article signed by Bogdan Mateescu in 2016. The author uses both the expression "alignment of villages" (in the title and in the text) and the term "systematization": "The first attempt to systematize the villages after 1831 takes place in 1832, at the initiative of Pavel D. Kiseleff, when it is ordered that all houses be built in the future in a predetermined alignment." From the article it is understood that the author establishes a relationship of similarity between "systematization" and "alignment" of the houses: "Two years after the end of the Russian occupation (1836), the native government will extend this measure (systematization) in the sense of bringing all the village houses to the line, which involved rebuilding a good part, if not even the majority of the houses in each village."⁴.

Among the authors with other specializations that we could research in the matter of the systematization of villages, we will only focus on an article by the engineer Alin M. Olarescu, head of works of Transylvania University in Brasov and member of the Romanian History Committee and the Philosophy of Science and Technology of the Romanian Academy, at the time of the article's elaboration. On his view, the traditional households in the Valsan valley (Arges county) acquired their "current form and structure" at the beginning of the 19th century, when the authorities ordered the "removal to the line", which "represented the placement of the houses on an established defining hearth by local and central authorities". The author believes that placing the villages on the line

¹ Louis Roman, „Așezările rurale ale Țării Românești în secolele XVI-XIX”, *Revista de Istorie*, tom 31, nr. 8 (1978): 1395.

² Vasile Novac, „Preocupări pentru așezarea caselor la linie în deceniul al IV-lea al secolului al XIX-lea în județul Argeș în lumina unor documente inedite”, *Argesis*, 11 (2002): 255.

³ Teodor Dina, „Satul Piscani, județul Argeș, în perioada aducerii la linie a caselor izolate”, *Argesis*, 16 (2007): 289.

⁴ Bogdan Mateescu, „Alinierea satelor în Țara Românească: corespondență purtată de subocârmuiri în anii 1830”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Modernă*, XXIX (2016): 83-110.

was a component of their systematization: "Putting the villages on the line constituted the first important intervention regarding their systematization."¹

If we got to this point of the discussion we have to refer to the contributions of the architect Florea Stanculescu, theoretician and practitioner of the systematization of Romanian villages, to the understanding of the expression "rural systematization", through which we can detect the semantic load attributable to the regulatory period established in the 20th century and which reverberates to the present day. Regarding this issue, in the years of the Second World War, Florea Stanculescu will define the concept of "ruralism": "Ruralism is the systematization of the rural area, which corresponds as appropriate as possible to the life of the population it includes, as well as its organization as an actor of production [...]. A prudent and incomplete name is that of rural systematization. The notion taken *stricto sensu* would represent the concerns related to rural human settlements, villages themselves. And it would refer more to the technical operations in this field. In order for rural systematizations to include the material in the definition, we have to distort its meaning and we don't need to. Rural systematizations will form part of ruralism. The systematization will address the village itself with its existing connections; ruralism will design the village with the intended role of organizing the territory."²

Conclusions

The architects who published works related to the systematization from the period before the middle of the 19th century identified and detailed two elements of it: the systematization of the settlements and the systematization of the territory, having different views on the degree of interpenetration or subordination between them. Seen through the prism of Florea Stanculescu's definition, their studies fall under the "ruralism" chapter.

Historians, although in some cases, without nuancing their theory, have also referred to the two elements of systematization (settlements and territory), have studied exclusively the systematization of the settlements, respectively the villages. In this way, they proved to be more consistent than the architects of Florea Stanculescu's methodological specifications, in the sense that by announcing their intention to research the "systematization of villages" they did not extend their approach beyond the territory of the settlements.

Among the specialists of other fields, it would be worth noting only the position of ethnologist Paul Petrescu, who showed a circumstantial understanding of the concept, close to that of architects.

As a result of those presented above, I am able to state that in the Regulatory period "alignment of houses" referred only to aspects related to residential buildings: location, plan, type (surface, buried), fencing, building material, building rules (beautiful, bright, healthy) and did not involve other operations in the village.

¹ Alin M. Olărescu, „Evoluția gospodăriei rurale de pe valea Vâlsanului, județul Argeș”, *Noema*, XI (2012): 331-341.

² Florea Stănculescu, „Ruralism”, *Urbanismul*, nr. 7-8 (2010-2011): 73.

Also, that "village alignment" included "alignment of the houses", but also referred to other components on the territory of the locality: roads, water sources, public buildings, parceled plans, communications, access to resources, infrastructure. There are cases in which, in more complex formulations, it extends its semantic area to include what is meant by the systematisation of the territory, that is the arrangement of water courses, communications between localities, hydro-technical installations, and the rectification of county borders.

"Regularizing the houses to the line" is synonymous with "aligning of houses", just as "regularizing the villages to line" is synonymous with "alignment of villages".

The modern concept of rural systematisation is made up of two components: village systematisation and land systematisation, where village systematisation refers to urban modernisation operations carried out within the urban area.

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